

Food & Beverage Protocols

Elementary & Secondary Schools



The following guidelines are provided to assist school administrators in planning for food distribution in schools during the Reopening of Schools for the 2020-2021 school year and are based on the Ministry of Education “Guide to Reopening Ontario’s Schools”. The Thunder Bay District Health Unit is in the process of developing a Student Nutrition Program “Tip Sheet” that may also inform some of these areas.

Snack Programs

The following guidelines should be used to determine the distribution of food for snack programs in all schools:

- School specific planning is important to meet the needs of individual school communities and to ensure that any student who wishes to participate can do so.
- Snack programs in schools should not be prepared or served by students.
- The preferred method of providing healthy snacks to students is a delivery model (class to class) to limit the unnecessary gathering of groups of students in one area.
- “Grab and Go” formats are acceptable providing distancing guidelines are adhered to at any location where students access snacks.
- Any person handling food must wash their hands with soap and water or use alcohol-based sanitizer first. Gloves are not recommended by the TBDHU for food service.
- Any surfaces, bins, or containers used for snack programs must be disinfected both prior to and following each use.
- Distribution of snacks in schools must not prevent or limit any student from access.
- Food distributed to students must continue to follow the guidelines listed in PPM 150 (School Food and Beverage Policy).

Breakfast Programs

The following guidelines should be used to determine the distribution of food for breakfast programs in all schools:

- Breakfast programs must not be setup in classrooms or common areas in such a way that would require or encourage students to congregate. A traditional “sit down” breakfast program is not permitted at this time.
- Food for breakfast programs should not be prepared or served by students.
- A “Grab & Go” format is preferred, but schools should determine best practices to provide a means for any student to participate.
- Any person handling food must wash their hands with soap and water or use alcohol-based sanitizer first. Gloves are not recommended by the TBDHU for food service.
- Any surfaces, bins, or containers used for breakfast program food must be disinfected both prior to and following each use.
- Food distributed to students must continue to follow the guidelines listed in PPM 150 (School Food and Beverage Policy).

Hot Lunches

Hot lunch programs (I.e. Pizza) are not approved at this time. Direction will be provided as it becomes available to establish safe practices for resuming hot lunch program delivery.

Milk

Considerations for milk distribution include:

- Cash should not be accepted for milk purchases
- Because milk is a pre-packaged product, it can be delivered loose in bins to each classroom.
- Where possible, milk should be delivered to classrooms to avoid congestion. Schools may continue to distribute milk centrally, but there must be a system in place where access is staggered. Students must line up at a distance of 2 metres.
- One individual (staff member, not a student) should hand milk out to each student to minimize the number of hands reaching into a bin and potentially contacting items.
- Any person handling milk (moving from fridge to bin, handing to student) must wash their hands with soap and water or use alcohol based sanitizer first. Gloves are not recommended by the TBDHU for food-service.
- All surfaces and containers used for milk distribution must be cleaned and sanitized prior to and after each use.

Foods Classes

Food classes in secondary schools may proceed with enhanced cleaning protocols being followed. Foods prepared by students in foods classes are not to be distributed to other students for consumption.

Equipment & Provisions

- No “self service” food items are permitted in schools (I.e. taking cut fruit from a tray, self-serve muffins, basket of plastic spoons)
- The use of microwave ovens is not permitted.
- Utensils, surfaces, and storage containers used for food preparation or distribution should be disinfected prior to and after each use.